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ABSTRACT

Four major considerations in the selection of materials for foreign language instruction are examined in this article. The goals of the program, scope of the course, time to begin instruction, and acquisition of materials are discussed. Enumerated criteria, accepted by the California State Board of Education, for evaluation of pupil textbooks, teachers' editions, teachers' manuals, and audiovisual aids are furnished. (RL)

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Criteria for Selection of Materials for Foreign Language, Kindergarten and Grades One Through Eight

In selecting materials for foreign language instruction, major consideration must be given to (1) program goals; (2) scope; (3) time to begin foreign language instruction; and (4) language programs to be maintained.

Major Considerations

Program Goals

The ultimate goal of foreign language instruction is to help pupils to develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the foreign language to the same level of proficiency as they have developed these skills in their native language. Such language instruction should lead pupils to a full understanding of the culture of the people who are native speakers of the foreign language.

Scope

Instructional materials should provide opportunity for pupils to practice each of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the beginning special emphasis may be given to listening and speaking. The determination of which skills require the greatest emphasis should be decided by the teacher.

None of the four skills, once having been introduced, should be abandoned. At different periods within the instructional program, each skill should receive emphasis according to the individual needs of the pupils. Thus, during the first day of foreign language instruction, a major effort in one class might be devoted to the development of the listening skill. In another class, it is possible that only a portion of the time would be devoted to practice in listening.

In still another class, one or more pupils may have demonstrated that they were ready to begin the reading skill in advance of the rest of the class. For these pupils instruction would be divided *appropriately* (not necessarily *equally*) between the listening, speaking, and reading skills, while the remainder of the class might still be using the full instructional period for listening and speaking exclusively or even conceivably for listening only.

The materials should be free of stereotype and should present the culture of the native speakers of the language authentically.

Time to Begin Foreign Language Instruction

Research and observation indicate that there is no neurological or psychological reason why the child should not learn one or more foreign languages from earliest infancy. Most recent, well-controlled experimentation, as well as observation of native bilingual and multilingual youths have shown that children who learn two or more languages simultaneously show no distressing effects. Indeed, they are clearly at an advantage, having developed the ability to communicate effortlessly and effectively in more than one language.

Therefore, the inclusion of foreign language in the curriculum should begin as early in the school life of the child as is administratively practical. Essential considerations within the area of "administrative practicality" would be, for example, the following:

1. Availability of teachers competent in the teaching of foreign language
2. Availability of appropriate instructional materials
3. Assurance of a continuous, sequential instructional program
4. Provision of adequate instructional time and space
5. Evidence of pupil interest

Provision of instructional materials in foreign language is uniquely complicated by the fact that the grade at which foreign language instruction is introduced varies considerably from district to district and even from school to school within a given district. It will be necessary, therefore, to provide instructional materials appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils who are beginning the study of a particular foreign language at a variety of grade levels.

In order that this problem be minimized, instructional materials should be adopted for use within the three most generally recognized elementary school grade groupings: kindergarten-primary (kindergarten through grade three), which will be referred to as Parcel I; intermediate (grades four through six), which will be referred to as Parcel II; and upper (grades seven and eight), which will be referred to as Parcel III.

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Schema for Foreign Language Textbook Adoption

Textbooks to be adopted for use with pupils beginning foreign language instruction	Textbooks to be adopted for use by pupils continuing foreign language instruction	Textbooks to be adopted for use by pupils continuing foreign language instruction
Ia leads to (kindergarten through grade three)⟶	Ib leads to (grades four through six)⟶	Ic (grades seven and eight)
IIa leads to (grades four through six)⟶	IIb (grades seven and eight)	
III (grades seven and eight)		

Thus, according to the Schema for Foreign Language Textbook Adoption, the instructional materials for Parcel I will consist of at least three sequential materials parcels designated as I_a, I_b, and I_c, and pupils will proceed through the materials as follows:

Parcel I_a – For use with pupils beginning foreign language study in kindergarten through grade three

Parcel I_b – For use with pupils who have completed the I_a materials or whose ability in the foreign language is equal to that which would have been attained through the use of the I_a materials

Parcel I_c – For use with pupils who have completed the I_a and I_b materials or whose ability in the foreign language is equal to that which would have been attained through the use of I_a and I_b materials

The instructional materials for Parcel II will consist of at least two sequential materials groupings designated as II_a and II_b, and pupils will proceed through the materials as follows:

Parcel II_a – For use with pupils beginning foreign language study in grades four through six

Parcel II_b – For use with pupils who have completed the II_a materials or whose ability in the foreign language is equal to that which would have been attained through the use of the II_a materials

The instructional materials for Parcel III will consist of one set of materials designated as III:

Parcel III – For use with pupils beginning foreign language study in grades seven and eight

In summary, the Roman numerals I, II, or III denote the grade levels at which pupils began foreign language instruction; e.g., K-3, 4-6, or 7-8. The subscripts a, b, and c indicate the proficiency levels in each of the series of materials.

These materials will be designated as basic and will not exclude the use of supplementary materials as deemed appropriate by the teacher.

Language Programs to Be Maintained

The materials will be provided as requested by a school district for the foreign language program or each of the foreign language programs the district will maintain.

Criteria for Evaluation of Pupil Textbooks, Teachers Editions, and Teachers Manuals

Pupil textbooks, teachers editions of the textbooks, and teachers manuals must meet the following criteria:

1. Provide the means for pupils to use the foreign language in natural communication by gradually decreasing the controls that have been initially imposed.
2. Present structures in the foreign language which are the most useful and natural in conveying the ideas and interests of children who are generally in the grade grouping under consideration.
3. Provide for systematic sequential development of basic foreign language structural patterns in small increments.
4. Provide for smooth transition from unit to unit and from level of difficulty to level of difficulty.

5. Provide reentry for reinforcement of previous learning.
6. Provide devices for determining how well the short-range objectives have been achieved.
7. Present all language in its natural form as appropriate to the situation in which it is used.
8. Present content through a variety of means appropriate to the content and to the student interest; e.g., songs, games, plays, stories, dialogs, poems.
9. Make available, for separate purchase by school districts, recorded tapes and discs appropriate to the content of the instructional materials.
10. Provide pictures which are culturally authentic and directly related to the printed material and which serve as visual cues.
11. Be (a) durable; (b) easily used; and (c) attractively presented.

Teachers editions of the textbooks and teachers manuals must also meet the following criteria:

1. Provide an explicit statement of the philosophical orientation of the text – give basic assumptions that can be seen directly in the body of the content.
2. Contain measurable long- and short-range objectives emphasizing performance in the skills appropriate to the material grouping under consideration.
3. Provide devices for determining how well the long-range objectives of the program have been achieved. (See also item number 6 in the preceding list of criteria.)
4. Include readily understood, sufficient, and specific directions for teachers; i.e., how to use component materials; suggested techniques, supplementary materials, and cultural items of interest.
5. Provide information as to how the instruction can best be individualized.
6. List phonological, syntactical, and morphological patterns in such a way that the teacher can know immediately what they are.
7. Show the teacher where the difficulties in pronunciation and structure may be expected to occur, and provide the teacher with suggestions as to how to help the student overcome those difficulties.
8. Provide suggestions for enrichment of the basic program.
9. Provide the opportunity for full use of appropriate aids – real objects, visual aids, and recorded materials – in creating authentic situations for the presentation and introduction of concepts and for practice in the application of concepts learned.

Pupils textbooks must also meet the following criteria (to be used in addition to the aforementioned criteria for all student textbooks):

*Parcel**	*Criteria*
I_a and II_a	1. Be predominantly a visually cued textbook 2. Have any written material in the foreign language reflect and reinforce the previously practiced spoken material.
*Parcel**	*Criteria*
I_b and II_b	1. Contain a brief review of the major content previously studied. 2. Contain visual cues as well as related printed material.
I_c	1. Provide a brief review of the previously studied material. 2. Contain visual cues as well as related printed material. 3. Be predominantly in the foreign language.
Parcel	*Criteria*
III	1. Contain visual cues as well as related printed material. 2. Be predominantly in the foreign language.

Criteria for Evaluating Visual and Auditory Elements of the Foreign Language Materials Program

In many of the currently published foreign language instructional materials, a textbook is either nonexistent or is the least important element of the package. Components such as audiotapes, disc recordings, and posters form the essential ingredients and are vital to the successful use of the package.

It is required, per the first item 9 on this page, that the foreign language materials adopted have available for purchase recorded tapes and discs which are essential to the effective use of the materials. The textbooks for parcels I_a, I_b, and II_b are

*See Schema for Foreign Language Textbook Adoption, page 2.

specified as visually cued. Criteria for evaluating visual and auditory elements of the foreign language materials program are, therefore, included here as follows:

Visual elements of the foreign language materials program must meet the following criteria:

1. Be large enough to be clearly visible to the viewer.
2. Present subject matter of interest to the pupils.
3. Illustrate clearly the language and/or cultural principle in question.
4. Be accurate regarding historical and cultural details.
5. Be easy to use.
6. Be accompanied by helpful teaching techniques.

Auditory aspects of the foreign language materials program must meet the following criteria:

1. Use authentic native or near-native speakers representing male and female adult as well as children's voices.
2. Be hi fidelity.
3. Employ recorded material designed for the specific program under scrutiny.
4. Use voices speaking at an appropriate rate and with accurate intonation.

(Note: These criteria have been accepted by the California State Board of Education to be used in the selection of state-approved foreign language textbooks. See the article on textbook adoption in the February 1970 FLAGS Newsletter for further details on the proposed adoption.)